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THE DECORATOR AND FURNISHER.



OCTOBER.

A MONTHLY SERIES OF PANEL SKETCHES, BY F. L. PENET.

GRAINING.

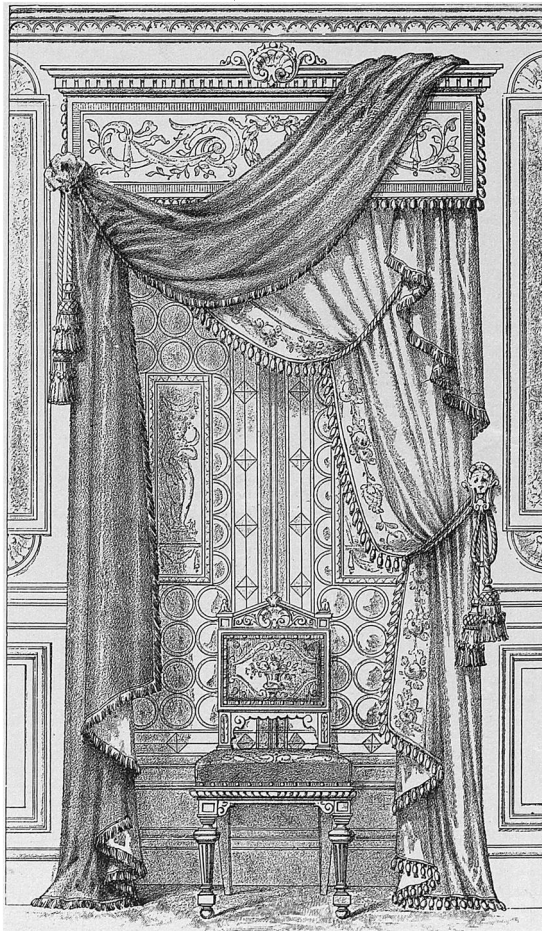
THE object of graining is to represent on plain white wood handsome hardwoods in their figures, shades and tones, or to carry out in color on its surface some fanciful scheme without reference to any particular kind of wood. When we look at choice hardwoods themselves when polished and warmed up with varnish, we find soft, rich and mellow tones, with frequently infinite variations in the various specimens of the same species. Oak, for instance, ranges through all the neutral browns from the dark Vandyke to the very light, whilst the knots may be boldly pronounced or pallid and vague.

The skill of the grainer is displayed in producing their semblance, with such modifications or combinations as his judgment may suggest. Good graining requires special aptitude, and, we may add, special artistic gifts. A ground color and then a stippling color are laid before the graining or oil color. Grainers follow different practices as to ingredients and proportions of all these. For the ground color the wood to be imitated is closely examined, its lightest shade selected, and one or more coats of a corresponding pigment applied, this pigment being mixed with gum water or vinegar, to which has been added a slight amount of fish glue. The stippling color, which is next applied, is beat softly with the edge of a stippler—a brush with long elastic hairs, which make a number of apertures in the coat, through which the light colored ground becomes visible. The graining coat is then laid on with a rubber sponge, small pieces of cloth, and different sized combs, the various markings of the natural wood, sometimes including knots, for the sake of greater naturalness, are carefully imitated. Combing and blending, the latter executed with a blender, are used to soften abrupt transitions. A coat of suitable varnish completes the work. Specimens may be continually met of graining executed so skillfully as to deceive the eye in its representation of natural wood.

The attacks made from time to time by would be critics on graining as perpetuating imposition, are deserving of no attention. The dogma set forth, if accepted, would exclude a number of other arts from the field of decoration, possibly the application of all color. Hardwoods are costly, and in their place economy suggests a substitute which art supplies. Without graining a great part of the exterior beauty of house woodwork would have to be foregone.

It is a great object with cabinet makers to be enabled to secure a good imitation of ebony as to color, beauty and density. Often failure arises from the woods to which an ebony surface is to be given, not being sufficiently close and compact in grain. Our investigations lead us to conclude, that this condition being complied with, the best process is as follows, a process which we have seen adopted with complete success in French ateliers: A coat of camphor dissolved in water is first given to the wood, and this is almost immediately followed with a coat composed of sulphate of iron and nutgall. A chemical combination takes place between the two coats, which together penetrate the wood and give it an indelible tinge. When the surface is sufficiently dry, it is rubbed with a hard brush of couch grass, and then with charcoal of the lightest and most friable quality obtainable. The charcoal must be free from any grains that will scratch. The flat parts are rubbed with natural stick charcoal, the indented portions and crevices with charcoal powder, and alternately with stick charcoal. From time to time as the work proceeds the surface is rubbed with a flannel soaked in linseed oil and turpentine. These pouncings repeated several times cause the charcoal powder and the oil to penetrate the wood, insuring a beautiful color and a perfect polish.

A NEW process of color printing on velvet and velveteen and called the simultaneous process, appears to us to be applicable to flock paper, enabling polychromatic designs to be simultaneously impressed on it, producing much of the effect of relief work. In this process the designs or pictures are built up in a case in solid colors, specially prepared, somewhat after the style of mosaic work; a portion is then cut off or sliced about an inch in thickness, and this is wrapped round a cylinder, and the composition has only to be kept moist, and any number of impressions can be printed off. In the case of flock paper, it would be desirable to have several thicknesses of flock first imposed.



DRAPERY, BY STEINER & HIRSCHFELD.